

*The Monopoly. My grandmother was a wonderful person. She taught me how to play the game Monopoly.<sup>™</sup> She understood that the name of the game is to acquire. She accumulated everything she could and eventually controlled the board. Then she would take my last dollar and always look me in the eye to say the same thing: “One day, you will learn to play the game.” That summer, I played Monopoly with a friend almost every day, all day long, and that summer I learned to play the game. I came to understand that the only way to win is to make a total commitment to acquisition. I came to understand that money, possessions and power – are the way that you keep score. By the end of that summer, I was more ruthless than my grandmother... to win the game, I learned to bend and break people and the rules. I sat down with her to play that fall. I took everything she had. I destroyed her financially, psychologically, and spiritually. I watched her lose every dollar and quit in utter defeat. Then she had one more thing to teach me. She said, “Now it all goes back in the box. All those houses and hotels; all the railroads and utility companies... All that property, power, and wonderful money... Now it all goes back in the box.” But! I worked so hard to get it all; I do not want it to go back in the box! ‘No,’ she said, “None of it was really yours. You got all heated up about it for a while. But the game was around a long time before you sat down at the board and it will be here long after you’re gone: players come, players go – the game always ends the same: everything goes back into the box. Houses and cars... Titles and clothes... Even your body.” Suddenly, I realized the fact that everything I clutch, consume, hoard, fight, beg, and compete for is going back into the box; I lose it all. Therefore – ask yourself; when you finally get the ultimate promotion or meet the ultimate person, when you have made the ultimate purchase, when you buy the ultimate home, have achieved the ultimate education, when you have stored up financial security and power and climbed the ladder of success to the highest rung that you can possibly climb ... and the thrill wears off – and it always wears off – then what? How far must you walk down that road before understanding where it leads? I never understood what people are thinking when screwing over everyone else for percentages of the take, action, or loot. Surely, you realize – it is never enough! One forfeits everything making the final trip out of here in a decorated box, covered with flowers, riding in the back of a black limousine, to spend eternity in a grave yard ENCHAINED to all that baggage. So, one must ask these questions: If that is what life’s about, what is the point of living! What matters?*